SUMMARY OF CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Withdrawn)

3. (Withdrawn)

4. (Withdrawn)

5. (Withdrawn)

6. (Withdrawn)

7. (Withdrawn)

8. (Withdrawn)

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AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

99. (New)

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110. (New)

111. (New)

AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

CLAIM LISTING

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, comprising:

(a) providing an electronic communication system which is available to a plurality of potential purchasers of said articles of manufacture;

(b) wherein said electronic communication system includes a user interface which facilitates (1) gathering of information from said plurality of potential purchasers and (2) presenting dynamically changing information to said plurality of potential purchasers;

(c) utilizing said electronic communication system to identify a plurality of articles of manufacture which are different from one another and which are available for purchase by said plurality of potential purchasers;

(d) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture are, or will be, located sufficiently physically proximate to one another prior to shipment to justify a consolidation and coordination of loading-for-shipping operations;

(e) wherein each of said plurality of articles of manufacture has particular shipping constraints associated therewith, including at least one of the following particular shipping constraints:

      (1) shipping origin;

      (2) shipping destination;

      (3) production completion date;

      (4) product volume and weight; and

      (5) product packaging.

5   (f)   providing at least one visual representation of a standardized shipping volume in said user interface of said electronic communication system;

(g) utilizing said electronic communication system to offer said plurality of articles of manufacture for sale to said plurality of potential purchasers;

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(h) obtaining financial commitments relating to said plurality of articles of manufacture from said plurality of potential purchasers through at least said electronic communication system;

15   (i)   wherein said standardized shipping volume comprises a standard shipping container;

(j)   utilizing said at least one visual representation of said standardized shipping volume to communicate over time whether or not sufficient financial commitments have been
20   obtained from said plurality of potential purchasers to fill one or more standard shipping containers, taking into account said at least one shipping constraint associated with each particular one of said articles of manufacture associated with each standard shipping container.

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3. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) providing a trusted intermediary entity which maintains said electronic communication system, qualifies said potential purchasers for participation, and in part determines what particular articles of manufacture are presented for purchase over said electronic communication system.

4. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container may comprise at least one of the following mixtures;
    (1) a mixture of different types of articles of manufacture;
    (2) a mixture of articles of manufacture which originate from different suppliers;
    (3) a mixture of articles of manufacture which are purchased by different ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

5. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping container may be disparate and unrelated products which are consolidated into a particular standard shipping container based upon the geographic proximity of a plurality of different factories.

6. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to an association between particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

7. (Withdrawn) A method of selling article of manufacture according to claim 6, wherein said association comprises at least one of:

(1) an ad hoc grouping of potential purchasers based mainly on interest in purchasing particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture;

(2) a grouping of potential purchasers which are affiliated other than through the purchase of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture; and

(3) a grouping of potential purchasers which are represented by an administrator.

8. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to geographic proximity of delivery destinations of particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

5   9. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular

10   shipping container due to temporal requirements of particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

10. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

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(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to production completion dates or date windows of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

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11. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular

25   standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to temporal complementarities of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

5 12. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein particular ones of said articles of manufacture are offered for sale on a conditional basis which is contractually binding on a particular manufacturer if a
10 predetermined condition is satisfied.

13. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 12, further comprising:

15 (l) wherein said predetermined condition comprises at least one of:
    (1) an order is obtained for a minimum number of units of a particular article of manufacture;
    (2) an aggregation of orders is obtained for a minimum number of units of a particular article of manufacture;
20   (3) offer acceptance time requirements are satisfied;
    (4) shipping origin requirements are satisfied;
    (5) shipping destination requirements are satisfied;
    (5) shipping container requirements are satisfied;
    (6) shipping routes requirements are satisfied;
25   (7) product delivery timing requirements are satisfied; and
    (8) minimum shipping utilization rates are satisfied.

AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

5   14. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said
10   shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which optimally fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping containers in order to optimize loading efficiency.

15. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2,
15   further comprising:

(k) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of
20   said plurality of articles of manufacture which fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping containers in order to optimize shipping and delivery efficiency.

16. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:
25

(k) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which fills at least one or a plurality of
30   standard shipping containers in order to optimize simultaneously loading efficiency and shipping and delivery efficiency.

5   17. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said at least one visual representation of said standardized shipping volume represents the utilization of volume within standard shipping containers

10   relative to financial commitments.

18. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

15   (k) wherein at least one of said plurality of articles of manufacture are offered for sale on a conditional basis;

(l) wherein said electronic communication system is utilized in order to aggregate financial commitments from said plurality of potential purchasers in order to satisfy

20   said conditional basis; and

(m) wherein said visual representation of a standardized shipping volume represents in part an aggregation of financial commitments.

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AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

19. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said visual representation of a standardized shipping volume comprises at least one of:

        (1) a textual representation of said standardized shipping volume;

        (2) a numeric representation of said standardized shipping volume;

        (3) an iconographic representation of said standardized shipping volume;

        (4) a pictorial representation of said standardized shipping volume.

20. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) loading standard shipping containers in manner which utilizes data associated with said visual representation of a standardized shipping volume, including said shipping constraints.

21. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 20:

(l) during said step of loading, performing at least one of the following:

        (1) prepackaging particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture with packaging suitable for delivery to a consumer;

        (2) preloading particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture in a manner which obtains labor-saving groupings within said standard shipping container of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture;

        (3) prelocating particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture in a manner which obtains a grouping within said standard shipping container by geographic region of delivery of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

5   22. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) presenting particular questions to said plurality of potential purchasers through said electronic communication system;

(l) taking into account responses to said particular questions as part of providing said
10   at least one visual representation of a standardized shipping volume.

23. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 20:

(k) during said step of loading, performing at least one of the following:
15   (1) intermixing within said standard shipping container particular ones of said
             plurality of articles of manufacture which are already sold with particular ones
             of said plurality of articles of manufacture which are not yet sold;
             (2) intermixing within said standard shipping container particular ones of said
             plurality of articles of manufacture which have a particular destination with
20   particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which do not yet
             have a destination.

24. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture are offered for sale on conditional terms under which manufacturers are not obligated to manufacture said particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture unless a minimum number of units are conditionally ordered;

(l) wherein said electronic communication system is utilized in order to aggregate financial commitments from at least one of said plurality of potential purchasers in order to satisfy said conditional terms and thereby require said manufacturers to manufacture said particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture; and

(m) wherein said visual representation of a standardized shipping volume represents in part an aggregation of financial commitments, providing at least one of the following:

(1) a real time representation of the amount of demand for said particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture, allowing said potential purchasers to individually and collectively optimize business decision making without requiring direct collaboration with one another;

(2) a real time representation of the amount of demand for said particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture, allowing said manufacturers to individually optimize business decision making without requiring direct collaboration with potential purchasers, and to forecast future activities;

(3) allowing individual potential purchasers to monitor collective activity and to identify economic opportunities to purchase desired quantities.

AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

25. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 24, further comprising:

(n) providing a work pad for each of said plurality of potential purchasers which allows the evaluation of potential order scenarios in a private view which depicts confirmed orders of others in combination with a potential order, and its impact on said visual representation of standardized shipping volume.

26. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 24, further comprising:

(n) providing a private view for each of said plurality of said manufacturers which depicts confirmed orders for each manufacturer individually, and its impact on said visual representation of standardized shipping volume, while maintaining confidential confirmed orders for other manufacturers.

27. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) an interface component which allows particular ones of said potential purchasers to form buying groups.

28. (Withdrawn) A method selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, wherein said electronic communication system allows simultaneous and mass presentation of said plurality of articles of manufacture to said potential purchasers.

29. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, wherein said electronic communication system comprises at least one of:

(1) a local area network;

(2) a wide area network;

(3) a cable system;

(4) an internet communication system; and

(5) a hybrid television and internet communication system.

30. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 3, wherein said electronic communication system comprises an Internet site which may be accessed through the Internet.

31. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, wherein said electronic communication system is available to potential purchasers that are pre-qualified as being financially responsible to the extent necessary to fulfill a commitment to purchase said articles of manufacture.

32. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacturer according to claim 2 wherein said potential purchasers comprise resellers of said articles of manufacture which purchase large quantities of said articles of manufacture for resale.

33. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2 wherein said potential purchasers comprise individual consumers of said articles of manufacture which purchase small quantities of said articles of manufacture for personal use.

AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

34. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2 wherein said potential purchasers comprise a mixture of:

> (1) resellers of said articles of manufacture which purchase large quantities of said articles of manufacture for resale; and
>
> (2) individual consumers of said articles of manufacture which purchase small quantities of said articles of manufacture for personal use.

35. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, wherein said electronic communication system is utilized to identify said plurality of article of manufacture by providing at least a product specification, quantities available, and a delivery date.

36. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture are offered for sale at multiple different pricing milestones which are certain natural milestones in at least one of (a) a manufacturing stage and (b) a distribution stage, including at least a plurality of pricing milestones selected from the following list of pricing milestones:

> (1) a design stage for an article of manufacture;
>
> (2) a pre-production stage for an article of manufacture;
>
> (3) a production stage for an article of manufacture;
>
> (4) a packaging stage for an article of manufacture;
>
> (5) a packing-for-shipment stage for an article of manufacture;
>
> (6) a shipping stage for an article of manufacture;
>
> (7) a warehousing stage for an article of manufacture; and
>
> (8) an in-stock stage for an article of manufacture.

AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

37. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 2, wherein said articles of manufacture comprise at least one of:

   (1) a durable article;

   (2) a non-perishable article;

   (3) a processed, perishable article;

   (4) a processed commodity.

38. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 2, wherein said articles of manufacture are manufactured at production sites which are located remotely from said plurality of potential purchasers which are located at a plurality of consumption locations.

39. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 35, further comprising:

   (I) determining a separate price for each of said plurality of pricing milestones to establish a series of different, discrete prices for said selected ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture, with each discrete price taking into account a change in commercial risk, cost, or opportunity as said pricing milestones are experienced, wherein said series of different, discrete prices provide a corresponding incrementally changing discount in price to encourage and reward timely commercial commitments.

40. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 2, wherein said electronic communication system utilizes a marketing interface to identify said plurality of articles of manufacture which comprises a plurality of cascading graphical user interfaces.

5   41. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 40, wherein said marketing interface includes an affinity reward system for soliciting, receiving and rewarding input from said plurality of potential purchasers concerning proposed articles of manufacture, and for aggregating said input.

10   42. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 41, wherein said marketing interface includes a demand research model which solicits, receives, and aggregates interest from said plurality of potential purchasers in proposed articles of manufacture.

15   43. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 42, wherein said aggregated input from said plurality of potential purchasers is utilized in making make/don't make decisions for said proposed articles of manufacture.

20   44. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 43, wherein said aggregated input from said potential purchasers is provided to potential manufacturers in order to assist them in making make/don't make decisions for said proposed articles of manufacture.

25   45. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 44, wherein said aggregated input from said plurality of potential purchasers is provided to potential manufacturers in-part in return for a production guarantee from potential manufacturers.

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46. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, comprising:

(a) providing an electronic communication system which is available to a plurality of potential purchasers of said articles of manufacture;

(b) wherein said electronic communication system includes a user interface which facilitates (1) gathering of information from said plurality of potential purchasers and (2) presenting dynamically changing information to said plurality of potential purchasers;

(c) utilizing said electronic communication system to identify a plurality of articles of manufacture which are different from one another and which are available for purchase by said plurality of potential purchasers;

(d) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture are, or will be, located sufficiently physically proximate to one another prior to shipment to justify a consolidation and coordination of loading-for-shipping operations;

(e) wherein each of said plurality of articles of manufacture has particular shipping constraints associated therewith, including at least one of the following particular shipping constraints:
      (1) shipping origin;
      (2) shipping destination;
      (3) production completion date;
      (4) product volume and weight; and
      (5) product packaging.

(f) providing at least one visual representation of a standardized shipping volume in

5   said user interface of said electronic communication system;

(g) utilizing said electronic communication system to offer said plurality of articles of manufacture for sale to said plurality of potential purchasers;

10   (h) obtaining financial commitments relating to said plurality of articles of manufacture from said plurality of potential purchasers through at least said electronic communication system;

(i) wherein said standardized shipping volume comprises a standard shipping
15   container;

(j) utilizing said at least one visual representation of said standardized shipping volume to communicate over time whether or not sufficient financial commitments have been obtained from said plurality of potential purchasers to fill one or more standard
20   shipping containers, taking into account said at least one shipping constraint associated with each particular one of said articles of manufacture associated with each standard shipping container.

47. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) providing a trusted intermediary entity which maintains said electronic communication system, qualifies said potential purchasers for participation, and in part determines what particular articles of manufacture are presented for purchase over said electronic communication system.

48. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping pallet may comprise at least one of the following mixtures;
    (1) a mixture of different types of articles of manufacture;
    (2) a mixture of articles of manufacture which originate from different suppliers;
    (3) a mixture of articles of manufacture which are purchased by different ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

49. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping pallet may be disparate and unrelated products which are consolidated into a particular standard shipping pallet based upon the geographic proximity of a plurality of different factories.

50. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping pallet are consolidated into a particular shipping pallet due to an association between particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

51. (Withdrawn) A method of selling article of manufacture according to claim 6, wherein said association comprises at least one of:

(1) an ad hoc grouping of potential purchasers based mainly on interest in purchasing particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture;

(2) a grouping of potential purchasers which are affiliated other than through the purchase of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture; and

(3) a grouping of potential purchasers which are represented by an administrator.

52. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping pallet are consolidated into a particular shipping pallet due to geographic proximity of delivery destinations of particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

53. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping pallet are consolidated into a particular shipping pallet due to temporal requirements of particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

54. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping pallet are consolidated into a particular shipping pallet due to production completion dates or date windows of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

55. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping pallet are consolidated into a particular shipping pallet due to temporal complementarities of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

56. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein particular ones of said articles of manufacture are offered for sale on a conditional basis which is contractually binding on a particular manufacturer if a

5   predetermined condition is satisfied.

57. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 56, further comprising:

10   (l) wherein said predetermined condition comprises at least one of:

(1) an order is obtained for a minimum number of units of a particular article of manufacture;

(2) an aggregation of orders is obtained for a minimum number of units of a particular article of manufacture;

15   (3) offer acceptance time requirements are satisfied;

(4) shipping origin requirements are satisfied;

(5) shipping destination requirements are satisfied;

(5) shipping pallet requirements are satisfied;

(6) shipping routes requirements are satisfied;

20   (7) product delivery timing requirements are satisfied; and

(8) minimum shipping utilization rates are satisfied.

58. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

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(k) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, pallet data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which optimally fills at least one or a plurality

30   of standard shipping pallets in order to optimize loading efficiency.

AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO NONCOMPLIANT AMENDMENT

59. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, pallet data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping pallets in order to optimize shipping and delivery efficiency.

60. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, pallet data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping pallets in order to optimize simultaneously loading efficiency and shipping and delivery efficiency.

61. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said at least one visual representation of said standardized shipping volume represents the utilization of volume within standard shipping pallets relative to financial commitments.

62. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein at least one of said plurality of articles of manufacture are offered for sale on a conditional basis;

(l) wherein said electronic communication system is utilized in order to aggregate financial commitments from said plurality of potential purchasers in order to satisfy said conditional basis; and

(m) wherein said visual representation of a standardized shipping volume represents in part an aggregation of financial commitments.

63. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said visual representation of a standardized shipping volume comprises at least one of:
    (1) a textual representation of said standardized shipping volume;
    (2) a numeric representation of said standardized shipping volume;
    (3) an iconographic representation of said standardized shipping volume;
    (4) a pictorial representation of said standardized shipping volume.

64. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:
(k) loading standard shipping pallets in manner which utilizes data associated with said visual representation of a standardized shipping volume, including said shipping constraints.

65. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 64:

(I) during said step of loading, performing at least one of the following:

(1) prepackaging particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture with packaging suitable for delivery to a consumer;

(2) preloading particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture in a manner which obtains labor-saving groupings within said standard shipping pallet of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture;

(3) prelocating particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture in a manner which obtains a grouping within said standard shipping pallet by geographic region of delivery of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

66. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) presenting particular questions to said plurality of potential purchasers through said electronic communication system;

(l) taking into account responses to said particular questions as part of providing said at least one visual representation of a standardized shipping volume.

67. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 64:

(k) during said step of loading, performing at least one of the following:

(1) intermixing within said standard shipping pallet particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which are already sold with particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which are not yet sold;

(2) intermixing within said standard shipping pallet particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which have a particular destination with particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which do not yet have a destination.

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68. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture are offered for sale on conditional terms under which manufacturers are not obligated to manufacture said particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture unless a minimum number of units are conditionally ordered;

(l) wherein said electronic communication system is utilized in order to aggregate financial commitments from at least one of said plurality of potential purchasers in order to satisfy said conditional terms and thereby require said manufacturers to manufacture said particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture; and

(m) wherein said visual representation of a standardized shipping volume represents in part an aggregation of financial commitments, providing at least one of the following:

(1) a real time representation of the amount of demand for said particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture, allowing said potential purchasers to individually and collectively optimize business decision making without requiring direct collaboration with one another;

(2) a real time representation of the amount of demand for said particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture, allowing said manufacturers to individually optimize business decision making without requiring direct collaboration with potential purchasers, and to forecast future activities;

(3) allowing individual potential purchasers to monitor collective activity and to identify economic opportunities to purchase desired quantities.

69. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 68, further comprising:

(n) providing a work pad for each of said plurality of potential purchasers which allows the evaluation of potential order scenarios in a private view which depicts confirmed orders of others in combination with a potential order, and its impact on said visual representation of standardized shipping volume.

70. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 68, further comprising:

(n) providing a private view for each of said plurality of said manufacturers which depicts confirmed orders for each manufacturer individually, and its impact on said visual representation of standardized shipping volume, while maintaining confidential confirmed orders for other manufacturers.

71. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) an interface component which allows particular ones of said potential purchasers to form buying groups.

72. (Withdrawn) A method selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, wherein said electronic communication system allows simultaneous and mass presentation of said plurality of articles of manufacture to said potential purchasers.

73. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, wherein said electronic communication system comprises at least one of:

(1) a local area network;

(2) a wide area network;

(3) a cable system;

(4) an internet communication system; and

(5) a hybrid television and internet communication system.

74. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 47, wherein said electronic communication system comprises an Internet site which may be accessed through the Internet.

75. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, wherein said electronic communication system is available to potential purchasers that are pre-qualified as being financially responsible to the extent necessary to fulfill a commitment to purchase said articles of manufacture.

76. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacturer according to claim 46 wherein said potential purchasers comprise resellers of said articles of manufacture which purchase large quantities of said articles of manufacture for resale.

77. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46 wherein said potential purchasers comprise individual consumers of said articles of manufacture which purchase small quantities of said articles of manufacture for personal use.

78. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46 wherein said potential purchasers comprise a mixture of:

(1) resellers of said articles of manufacture which purchase large quantities of said articles of manufacture for resale; and

(2) individual consumers of said articles of manufacture which purchase small quantities of said articles of manufacture for personal use.

79. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, wherein said electronic communication system is utilized to identify said plurality of article of manufacture by providing at least a product specification, quantities available, and a delivery date.

80. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture are offered for sale at multiple different pricing milestones which are certain natural milestones in at least one of (a) a manufacturing stage and (b) a distribution stage, including at least a plurality of pricing milestones selected from the following list of pricing milestones:

(1) a design stage for an article of manufacture;

(2) a pre-production stage for an article of manufacture;

(3) a production stage for an article of manufacture;

(4) a packaging stage for an article of manufacture;

(5) a packing-for-shipment stage for an article of manufacture;

(6) a shipping stage for an article of manufacture;

(7) a warehousing stage for an article of manufacture; and

(8) an in-stock stage for an article of manufacture.

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81. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 46, wherein said articles of manufacture comprise at least one of:

      (1) a durable article;

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      (2) a non-perishable article;

      (3) a processed, perishable article;

      (4) a processed commodity.

82. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim

15   46, wherein said articles of manufacture are manufactured at production sites which are located remotely from said plurality of potential purchasers which are located at a plurality of consumption locations.

83. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim

20   80, further comprising:

      (l) determining a separate price for each of said plurality of pricing milestones to establish a series of different, discrete prices for said selected ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture, with each discrete price taking into account a change in commercial risk, cost, or opportunity as said pricing milestones are experienced,

25   wherein said series of different, discrete prices provide a corresponding incrementally changing price to encourage and reward timely commercial commitments.

84. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 46, wherein said electronic communication system utilizes a marketing interface to

30   identify said plurality of articles of manufacture which comprises a plurality of cascading graphical user interfaces.

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5   85. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 84, wherein said marketing interface includes an affinity reward system for soliciting, receiving and rewarding input from said plurality of potential purchasers concerning proposed articles of manufacture, and for aggregating said input.

10   86. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 85, wherein said marketing interface includes a demand research model which solicits, receives, and aggregates interest from said plurality of potential purchasers in proposed articles of manufacture.

15   87. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 86, wherein said aggregated input from said plurality of potential purchasers is utilized in making make/don't make decisions for said proposed articles of manufacture.

20   88. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 87, wherein said aggregated input from said potential purchasers is provided to potential manufacturers in order to assist them in making make/don't make decisions for said proposed articles of manufacture.

25   89. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 88, wherein said aggregated input from said plurality of potential purchasers is provided to potential manufacturers in-part in return for a production guarantee from potential manufacturers.

5   90. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 46, further comprising:

(k) wherein said at least one visual representation of said standardized shipping volume comprises:

(1) at least one geometric icon defining a graphical user interface area;

10   (2) a plurality of segments located within said at least one geometric icon, presented in a manner which allows each segment to be distinguished from other segments;

(3) wherein each of said at least one geometric icon represents a separate one of a plurality of standard shipping pallets; and

15   (4) wherein said interface area in said graphical user interface which defined by each of said at least one geometric icon represents a usable volume within said standard shipping pallet;

(5) wherein each of said segments represents at least one of (a) utilized space, or (b) available space within said standard shipping pallet.

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5   91. (Withdrawn) A method of selling articles of manufacture, according to claim 2, further comprising:

(k) wherein said at least one visual representation of said standardized shipping volume comprises:

(1) at least one geometric icon defining a graphical user interface area;

10   (2) a plurality of segments located within said at least one geometric icon, presented in a manner which allows each segment to be distinguished from other segments;

(3) wherein each of said at least one geometric icon represents a separate one of a plurality of standard shipping containers; and

15   (4) wherein said interface area in said graphical user interface which defined by each of said at least one geometric icon represents a usable volume within said standard shipping container;

(5) wherein each of said segments represents at least one of (a) utilized space, or (b) available space within said standard shipping container.

5   92. (New) A method of selling articles over a distributed data processing system, comprising:

(a)   identifying a product utilizing said distributed data processing system,

(b)   soliciting purchase commitments from potential purchasers over said distributed data processing system;

10   (c)   accepting contingent offers which depend upon obtaining a predetermined minimum number of offers before acceptance of said offers; and

(d)   utilizing at least one visual representation of shipping space available within a standardized shipping volume in said distributed data processing system to communicate over time whether or not sufficient financial commitments have been

15   obtained from said plurality of potential purchasers to fill one or more standard shipping containers.

5   93. (New) A method according to claim 92, further comprising:

(e) wherein said distributed data processing system includes a user interface which facilitates (1) gathering of information from potential purchasers and (2) presenting dynamically changing information to said potential purchasers.

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94. (New) A method according to claim 93, further comprising:

(f) utilizing said distributed data processing system to identify a plurality of articles of manufacture which are different from one another and which are available for

15   purchase by said plurality of potential purchasers.

95. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture are, or will be, located sufficiently

20   physically proximate to one another prior to shipment to justify a consolidation and coordination of loading-for-shipping operations.

5   96. (New) A method according to claim 95, further comprising:

(h) wherein each of said plurality of articles of manufacture has particular shipping constraints associated therewith, including at least one of the following particular shipping constraints:

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        (1) shipping origin;

        (2) shipping destination;

        (3) production completion date;

        (4) product volume and weight; and

        (5) product packaging.

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97. (New) A method according to claim 92, further comprising:

(e) providing a trusted intermediary entity which maintains said distributed data processing system, qualifies said potential purchasers for participation, and in part determines what particular articles of manufacture are presented for purchase over said electronic communication system.

98. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container may comprise at least one of the following mixtures;

    (1) a mixture of different types of articles of manufacture;

    (2) a mixture of articles of manufacture which originate from different suppliers;

    (3) a mixture of articles of manufacture which are purchased by different ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

99. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping container may be disparate and unrelated products which are consolidated into a particular standard shipping container based upon the geographic proximity of a plurality of different factories.

100. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to an association between particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

101. (New) A method according to claim 100, wherein said association comprises at least one of:

(1) an ad hoc grouping of potential purchasers based mainly on interest in purchasing particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture;

(2) a grouping of potential purchasers which are affiliated other than through the purchase of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture; and

(3) a grouping of potential purchasers which are represented by an administrator.

102. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to geographic proximity of delivery destinations of particular ones of said plurality of potential purchasers.

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5   103. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular visual representation of a standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to temporal requirements of particular ones of said plurality of
10   potential purchasers.

104. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular
15   standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to production completion dates or date windows of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.

105. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:
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(g) wherein said plurality of articles of manufacture associated with each particular standard shipping container are consolidated into a particular shipping container due to temporal complementarities of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture.
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5   106. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) wherein particular ones of said articles of manufacture are offered for sale on a conditional basis which is contractually binding on a particular manufacturer if a predetermined condition is satisfied.

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107. (New) A method according to claim 106, further comprising:

(h) wherein said predetermined condition comprises at least one of:

(1) an order is obtained for a minimum number of units of a particular article of
15   manufacture;

(2) an aggregation of orders is obtained for a minimum number of units of a particular article of manufacture;

(3) offer acceptance time requirements are satisfied;

(4) shipping origin requirements are satisfied;

20   (5) shipping destination requirements are satisfied;

(5) shipping container requirements are satisfied;

(6) shipping routes requirements are satisfied;

(7) product delivery timing requirements are satisfied; and

(8) minimum shipping utilization rates are satisfied.

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108. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which optimally fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping containers in order to optimize loading efficiency.

109. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping containers in order to optimize shipping and delivery efficiency.

110. (New) A method according to claim 94, further comprising:

(g) providing a shipping management module which is a computer program which receives as input order data, production data, shipping data, container data, and said shipping constraints and which operates to generate groupings of particular ones of said plurality of articles of manufacture which fills at least one or a plurality of standard shipping containers in order to optimize simultaneously loading efficiency and shipping and delivery efficiency.

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5   111. (New) A method according to claim 92, further comprising:

(e) wherein said at least one visual representation of said standardized shipping volume comprises:

(1) at least one geometric icon defining a graphical user interface area;

10   (2) a plurality of segments located within said at least one geometric icon, presented in a manner which allows each segment to be distinguished from other segments;

(3) wherein each of said at least one geometric icon represents a separate one of a plurality of standard shipping containers; and

(4) wherein said interface area in said graphical user interface which defined

15   by each of said at least one geometric icon represents a usable volume within said standard shipping container;

(5) wherein each of said segments represents at least one of (a) utilized space, or (b) available space within said standard shipping container.